

TURNER'S
DIVINE VALIDITY
OF
INFANT BAPTISM
BY
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THE
DIVINE VALIDITY
OF
INFANT BAPTISM;

AS ADMINISTERED BY POURING OR SPRINKLING.

BY GEORGE TURNER,
WESLEYAN MINISTER.

“Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.”—Mark x. 14.

“Then will I SPRINKLE clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.”—Ezek. xxxvi. 25.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following pages are published at the united request of the Leaders'-Meeting, and of many personal friends, in this town and neighbourhood: and the circumstances which gave rise to the discussion of this subject are sufficiently detailed in "A Word to Men of Reason and Religion," &c., first published as a separate tract, and now appended to the discourses on baptism.

To those who heard the following sermons it will be superfluous to remark, that no material alteration has been made, either in the argument, the arrangement, or the style: for though they certainly were *not prepared* with any reference to publication, they *were prepared* on the principle that nothing of moment should ever be advanced in the pulpit but what it would be proper to publish in print.

One or two unpremeditated expressions which were uttered on the spur of the moment, I would have softened or expunged; but as a matter of mere self-defence, and for a reason stated elsewhere, (*vide* p. 74,) I have found it necessary to retain them as they are.

Stockport, December 12th, 1843.

CONTENTS.

	Page
Introductory remarks	1
Arguments in favour of Infant Baptism	2—26
Objections against it examined and refuted	27—37
Concluding observations.....	37, 38
The immersionist theory proved to be destitute of all scriptural authority and support	39—50
Positive proof that, in the New Testament, the Greek BAPTIZO signifies, not <i>to immerse</i> or <i>dip</i> , but <i>to wash</i> , <i>to</i> <i>pour</i> , and <i>to sprinkle</i>	50—59
Concluding remarks	59—63
Postscript.....	64
A WORD TO MEN OF REASON AND RELIGION	66—74

THE
DIVINE VALIDITY
OF
INFANT BAPTISM.

SERMON I.

THE INFANT'S CLAIM ASSERTED.

“Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”—Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

“BE not carried about,” says the Apostle, “with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.” This Scripture strongly affirms the importance of correct and *settled* notions in religion; and it as strongly infers that to be changing and unsettled in religious opinions is a serious evil. In fact, “Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel,” is a judgment but too applicable to many professed Christians chiefly on this account.

To prevent this evil in Christian churches, it is sometimes necessary to pause, and to ask the memorable question, “What is truth?” And though the love of controversy is to be deprecated rather than cherished, it is sometimes necessary to carry the spirit of calm inquiry and discussion into the various branches both

of Christian truth and Christian practice. This is what we purpose on the present occasion, in reference to the subject of Infant Baptism.

Before we enter upon the discussion, two preliminary remarks are necessary :—

First, as to the QUESTION in dispute. The Baptists, so called, affirm that infant baptism is no sacrament ; that it is only a foolish invention of men, criminally substituted for “the ordinance of God.” They affirm, moreover, that none are entitled to receive the rite of baptism but such believers in Christ as make a public profession of religion, and give scriptural evidence of their conversion to God ; so that those who have been baptized in infancy only, are bound to consider themselves “as unbaptized persons.” We maintain, on the contrary, that infants are proper subjects of baptism ; that the infant children of Christian parents ought to be baptized ; and that baptism administered in infancy is just as valid as adult baptism either is or can be.

Secondly, as to the *mode* of proof. The Baptists do not pretend that the Scriptures *expressly forbid* the baptism of infants ; nor do we allege that the Scriptures *expressly enjoin* or sanction it. In fact, whether we *affirm* or whether we *deny* the right of infants to Christian baptism, we must arrive at and maintain our conclusion, by reasoning from a variety of facts recorded in Scripture, and from principles inculcated by the inspired writers. And hence it becomes necessary that the process of reasoning be the more carefully attended to.

In favour of infant baptism, we argue,—

FIRST, *From the divinely-instituted* COVENANT OF CIRCUMCISION.

That God had a church under the Old Testament, will not be denied. Four hundred and thirty years before the giving of the law, at Sinai, God established

that covenant of which circumcision was the seal, with Abraham and his seed, "for an everlasting covenant." (Gen. xvii. 7.) This covenant included, not only temporal blessings, but blessings spiritual and eternal. "I will be a God unto thee and unto thy seed." Such was the promise to Abraham; and it includes all good, both temporal and eternal. "Yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

Again, this was to all intents and purposes a *Gospel* covenant; a dispensation of that glorious grace which, in all its manifestations, "came by Jesus Christ." Such plainly was the judgment of St. Paul; for he declares that the covenant made with Abraham was "confirmed of God in Christ." And to demonstrate that the Gospel dispensation itself is but a fuller and more glorious administration of the covenant made with Abraham, the Apostle first declares that God gave the inheritance to Abraham "by promise," and then proceeds to add, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. iii. 29.)

To serve a purpose, some have absurdly endeavoured to divest this covenant of its spiritual and permanent character; to reduce it to a merely political and temporary compact. But this is most unscriptural. "What profit is there of circumcision?" It is the Apostle's question; to which he answers, "Much every way: chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." (Rom. iii. 1, 2.) So far from being excluded, *spiritual benefits* are made the chief; so much so, indeed, that these, and these alone, are separately mentioned. Agreeably to which, it is also said, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, &c., that *the blessing of Abraham* might come upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." (Gal. iii. 13, 14.)

In vain, therefore, is it attempted to degrade this covenant into a merely political and temporary arrangement. The covenant was spiritual as well as temporal; it was for eternity as well as for time; and the grand object of it was to place the seed of Abraham in a blessed, spiritual, and church relationship to God. "And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." (Gal. iii. 17.) So that neither the bringing in, nor the abolition, of the Mosaic law, affects the grand provisions of the "everlasting covenant" of God, with Abraham and his seed.

Again, it is an established and admitted fact, that infants were originally included in this gracious covenant, and constituted members of the church of God. Yes, at eight days old they were admitted into the church of God by a religious ordinance of divine appointment; and they then received the seal of that covenant by which Jehovah had become *their* God, as well as the God of their fathers. Besides which, it is notorious that, in the Scripture, these "little ones" are *expressly* mentioned as entering "into the covenant of the Lord their God, and into his oath." (Deut. xxix. 11, 12.)

Now, to say the very least, these facts demonstrate that there can be nothing absurd, nothing improper, in the idea that even infants may be fit subjects for a divinely-appointed ordinance, parties to a spiritual covenant, and members of God's spiritual church. Nay, these facts demonstrate that there is in this an infinite fitness and propriety. To deny this, is surely to affect to be wiser than God; and rashly to pour contempt upon a positive divine institution.

We argue,—

SECONDLY, *From the substantial IDENTITY of the church of God in all ages, from the time of Abraham to the end of the world.*

The foregoing observation being kept in mind, it ought to be more distinctly considered, that the church of God under the Gospel dispensation is but an enlarged and beautified *continuation* of that same church as it existed from the beginning. The *foundation* is the same, that is Christ; and “other foundation can no man lay.” The *promise* to the faithful is the same; the favour of God and life everlasting. The *condition* of acceptance is the same; that is, obedient faith, or faith which worketh by love. To borrow the Apostle’s figure, the “olive tree” is, in all ages, still one and the same; the root, the sap, the vital juices, still the same. Only, at the coming of Christ, the Jews, “the natural branches,” were broken off through unbelief; while the Gentiles who believed were grafted in by faith.

The changes now introduced into the constitution of the church, are clearly indicated in the Scriptures, and may be thus summed up. (1.) Freedom from the oppressive yoke of “carnal ordinances;” and a large increase of spiritual blessings. (2.) The breaking down of the ancient “wall of partition;” and the incorporation of the Gentiles with the people of God. (3.) The substitution of the Lord’s supper for the Jewish passover; and of Christian baptism for the Jewish rite of circumcision.

In regard to this substitution we may remark, that as to the first particular, the words of the Apostle are sufficiently decisive: “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast,” &c. (1 Cor. v. 7, 8.) And the same inspired authority explains what he had called “the circumcision of Christ,” by our being “buried

with him in baptism." (Col. ii. 10—12.) A proof that what circumcision was under the *old* constitution, baptism is under the *new*.

Those who deny the sacrament of baptism to infants have cause enough for anxiety on this point. And they may cavil at the inference which we draw from Col. ii. But even could it be proved (and we believe it cannot) that our view of this Scripture is incorrect, the *fact* would still remain, that according to the scripturally defined uses and objects of the two ordinances, baptism is in reality that to the Christian church, which circumcision was to the Jewish. In this view of the case, baptism corresponds with circumcision both in its nature and its design. For instance, "circumcision implied the depravity of our nature and the necessity of regeneration:—so does baptism. Circumcision was the seal of the covenant, or the sign of a covenant relationship to God:—so is baptism. Circumcision was the ordinance of initiation into the Jewish church:—so is baptism into the church of Christ; or we have no initiating rite at all. In circumcision the subject was devoted to the Lord:—so in baptism the person is devoted to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." It is plain, therefore, that, for all the purposes of the present argument, baptism is to the *Christian* what circumcision was to the *Jewish* church.*

The question then is, Do the infant offspring of Christian believers stand in a lower, a less sacred, and less dear relationship to God, his covenant, and his church now, than the infant offspring of Jewish believers did

* The oft repeated cavil, that *only males* were circumcised, is too childish to deserve a serious notice. The reader will be aware that in this, as in some other cases, the males represented the entire nation. So in that well known law, "Three times in the year, *all thy males* shall appear before the Lord God."

four thousand years ago? Both the letter and the spirit of the entire Gospel institute affirm that the very contrary of all this is the truth. Since, therefore, it is manifest, (1.) That baptism is to the *Christian* what circumcision was to the *Jewish* church; (2.) That infants were circumcised in the former; it follows, as a clear and certain consequence, (3.) That infants ought to be baptized in the latter. Nor can anything less than an express divine prohibition warrant the exclusion of infants, as such, from this ordinance. We need not tell you that there is no such prohibition in the Bible. But of this hereafter.

We argue,—

THIRDLY, *From the fact that infants do constitute a part of the spiritual kingdom or church of Christ.*

To omit other Scriptures which might be quoted, we adduce the following, as an unquestionable proof that infants do constitute a part of the Redeemer's church or kingdom. "They brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." (Mark x. 13, 14.)

The Lord here speaks of *infants*; yes, he affirms directly that infants belong to and constitute a part of his kingdom. This is beyond all reasonable dispute. The Saviour is here assigning a reason why "*little children*," that is, mere infants, should be brought to him, and blessed by him. That reason is, "For of such is the kingdom of God." They belong to my kingdom; therefore, they are entitled to my blessing. "And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."

Again, "the kingdom of God," or as it is sometimes

called, "the kingdom of heaven," must signify either the state of glory or the state of grace; the church in heaven, or the church on earth.

Will you, then, by this expression understand, as some do, the kingdom of future glory? If so, it follows that infants belong to this. Yes, they are "heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ." And it is a truth not less scripturally certain than it is delightful in itself, that every infant soul snatched from this sinful world by early death, becomes a gem in the Redeemer's crown, a star in the heavens of bliss: "of such is the kingdom of God." But if so, to deny to them the ordinance of Christian baptism is alike unwarrantable, unscriptural, and harsh.

All admit that without baptism there can be no reception into, nor communion with, the church on earth. But on what ground, or by what right, can we exclude *those* from the church upon earth who are allowed to be fit for "the general assembly and church of the first-born who are written in heaven?" The church and the world, the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan, divide the family of man. With one or with the other, these must be classed. On what rational principle, then, will you cast out from the church and identify with the world, cast out of the kingdom of Christ and identify with the kingdom of Satan, those who are really accepted of God, and "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," and of whom it is affirmed by Christ himself, "Of such is the kingdom of God?"

Will you then, as some others do, understand by "the kingdom of God," the church on earth? If so, the question is at once decided. For, in that case, that infants are members of the church now as they were under the Old Testament, is a fact established by divine authority. And the right of infants to the ordinance of baptism follows as a matter of course. For it is admitted

on all hands, that the right of membership includes in it a right to the sacrament of baptism. The argument may be stated briefly thus :—

Those who belong to, and are a part of, Christ's *spiritual* church, have an undoubted right to be admitted into his *visible* church; but infants are declared by Christ himself to be a part of his church spiritual: therefore, infants have an undoubted right to be admitted into his church visible. And since baptism is the only divinely appointed mode of admission into *this* church, infants have an undoubted right to the ordinance of baptism.

In a word, if with one class of writers we understand "the kingdom of God" to mean the state of glory, then, from the declaration of Christ that "of such is the kingdom of God," it will follow that infants are in a state of preparation for that blessed estate; that they are as truly under the renewing influence of the Holy Ghost as adult believers are, and stand in substantially the same relationship to Christ as adult believers do. But "can any forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" If by the *kingdom* we, in this place, understand the *church*, then, even upon Baptist principles, this Scripture becomes direct authority for infant baptism.

We argue,—

FOURTHLY, *From the command of Christ to his Apostles:* "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," &c. (Matt. xxviii. 18, 19.)

This Scripture has been called by some, "the great enacting law of Christian baptism;" and on no occasion did Jesus express himself with greater solemnity upon the subject of baptism than upon this occasion. Now considering the manner in which the infant offspring of

God's people had always, up to the present time, been admitted into and incorporated with his church, we are warranted to assume that, had it been the divine intention henceforth to exclude them, then would the prohibitory clause of this enactment have been both clear and explicit. Proceed we, then, to examine the terms of this divine command.

It is pretty generally admitted that the word *teach* does but imperfectly translate the original *μαθητευειν*, which signifies *to disciple*. Besides, as Mr. Wesley remarks, such a translation creates "a vain and senseless repetition,—*Teach*, baptizing and *teaching*." In the margin of our Bibles the word is rendered, "make disciples of." The meaning of the original is well expressed by the old English phrase, "Disciple (or make disciples of) all nations."

The *manner* in which this is to be done is thus explained, "Baptizing, &c., teaching, &c." Baptism *alone* does not make a disciple; to this divine instruction must be added. By baptism the infant candidate is *entered*, so to speak, into the school of Christ; but he is never fully *discipled* until taught "to observe" all things commanded by his Lord and Master. Baptism *initiates* or commences, divine instruction perfects and completes, the work. Even in the case of adults, thousands were baptized by the Apostles, and added to the church, on the very day, and almost in the very hour, in which they first heard the Gospel preached; and when it would be utterly absurd to suppose they had attained to either a very extensive or a very accurate knowledge of Christian doctrines. In knowledge, at least, the mass of these could be but little more than *babes* new born. And certainly nothing can be more entirely consistent with the spirit, and even with the letter, of this divine institute, than that the

“infant of days” should by baptism be initiated into Christ’s spiritual kingdom, and thenceforth, from the earliest possible period, be brought up “*in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*”

At all events, there certainly is nothing in the terms of this command that can be said to exclude infants from Christian baptism. After the manner above indicated, “all nations” are to be discipled. But of every nation, infants and little children constitute an essential and a very important part. Now when God’s covenanted mercies were confined to *one* nation, it is an undeniable fact that the infants of that nation were included as well as the adults. The parents and their “little ones” were both included in the covenant, and both received the covenant *sign*. And hence it must follow that since the blessings of this covenant are mercifully extended to *all* nations, infants as well as adults must still be included as before. A view in which we are directly sanctioned by that emphatic announcement of the Apostle, “The promise is unto you and to your children.” And on this principle, the words before us are as much, and as directly, a command to baptize infants as they are a command to baptize adults.

To determine how the Apostles would be most likely to interpret the divine command, “Disciple all nations,” we must endeavour to place ourselves in their circumstances, and to enter into their established views and prejudices. It must be remembered that with them the work of conversion, proselytism, and baptism, that is, the work of making disciples, was nothing *new*. To suppose it was, would be false. Nay, we believe it will not be denied by any competent and unbiassed witness, that even infant baptism had from very ancient times been practised by the Jews themselves. For though

it does not appear certain that the Jews baptized their own children, we consider the following points to be established : (1.) That when a Gentile or stranger was converted to the Jewish faith, he was admitted into the church by the double rite of circumcision and baptism. (2.) That the infant children of such converts, if any, were baptized as well as the parents themselves. And, (3.) That, being thus baptized, these infant children were called proselytes to the religion of Moses, as well as their adult parents. And though the Jews, in such a case, required the adult to give some reasonable proof as to the soundness of his conversion, they did not consider *infancy* as at all disqualifying the subject for a solemn admission by baptism into that church of which the parent had now become a voluntary member.

Now the Apostles of our Lord were Jews ; and with them the idea of infant membership by infant baptism was perfectly familiar, it had become perfectly naturalized. Nor had they ever seen a church sanctioned by divine authority, which did not admit *infants* as well as adults into its bosom ; and *both* by the *same* divine ordinance. When, therefore, they received the divine command to proselyte or disciple all nations, *baptizing* them in the name of the adorable Trinity, and *teaching* them to observe the ordinances of Christ, would it ever, could it ever, enter into their hearts to suppose that now, for the first time, the infant offspring of their converts were to be denied this long conceded privilege ? The thing is so unlikely, that had it really been the divine intention that infants should, from this time, be cast out of the visible church, or denied admission into it, we have a right to assume that the prohibitory precept would have been clear and explicit. Since, therefore, this divine command, " Go ye, disciple all nations, baptizing them," &c., contains not the least

shadow of such a prohibition, we hold it to be morally certain that the Apostles would baptize the children of their converts as well as those converts themselves; particularly as their Lord had so emphatically declared, "Of such is the kingdom of God," and had likewise said, "Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me."

We argue,—

FIFTHLY, *From recorded facts or instances of HOUSEHOLD BAPTISM, as administered by the Lord's Apostles.*

In perfect accordance with all that we have advanced, is the undoubted apostolic practice of baptizing the *families* of their converts; which plainly appears to have been done as a matter of course. The baptism of Stephanas and his family, of Lydia and her house, and of the Philippian jailer "and all his," are facts in proof that such was, from the beginning, the apostolic rule. Considered in themselves, these family baptisms are very important; but taken in connexion with the established facts, that infant circumcision was a divine ordinance, and that it was the ancient Jewish custom to baptize the infant offspring of their proselytes, they fall but little short of a positive proof that infant baptism was practised by the Lord's Apostles.

A gentleman, who had formerly been a Baptist minister, but who had been led to abandon the Baptist persuasion, in a published address to his former congregation, has the following: "It is worthy of remark, that in all the Baptist Missionary Reports we never read of the baptism of *whole households* at one and the same time." The fact is certainly a remarkable one; but if it were true that the Baptists are, as they pretend to be, the only people under heaven who act according to the apostolic plan, this fact would be still more unaccountable.

Without one particle of proof, and in opposition to the strongest probabilities, the Baptist is obliged gratuitously to assume, that in all the families baptized by the Apostles and their coadjutors there were no little children or infants; none but converted and adult believers in Christ. The supposition is not only improbable but extravagant. And yet, without it, the impugners of *infant baptism* cannot maintain their ground.

The case of the jailer and his family is thus recorded: "And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." (Acts xvi. 33.) So far as the baptism of this family is concerned, this is the entire account.

In reply to this, the impugners of infant baptism say, "The Apostles would not speak the word of the Lord to infants; nor could it be said of infants that 'they rejoiced believing in God.' But this *is* said of the jailer and all his." This last assertion we must pronounce to be erroneous, nay false. Properly speaking, it is *not* affirmed, it is not even implied, that every member of this family either *believed* or *rejoiced* in God. But let us examine the matter a little.

We maintain that there is nothing, absolutely nothing, in the inspired narrative of this transaction to warrant the exclusion of infants from this family. Suppose a modern Missionary to enter the house of some Caffre or New-Zealander. He has before him an entire family. There is the parent; and there are the children, from the infant of days to the youth of eighteen years. He preaches to the family. Where would be the absurdity of saying, He spake the word of God to all that were in that house?

Besides, pray why must not the word of God be spoken to *little* children? True, this can avail nothing

to the *mere* infant. But there are thousands, there are tens of thousands, of children in *comparative infancy*, to whom the word of the Lord *is* spoken, and ought to be spoken, and must be spoken. And a thousand facts there are to prove that *this* “is not in vain in the Lord;” a thousand affecting instances in which “out of the mouth of babes and sucklings” God hath “perfected praise.”

Considering that the jailer, from his activity and other circumstances, appears to have been in the vigour of manhood, and to have been surrounded with a considerable family, it is morally certain that this family did include infants or young children. But if infants made a part of the family, they were *certainly baptized*; for it is declared that “he and all his were baptized straightway;” which must include the infant as well as the adult.

Neither is it said, as some unwarrantably affirm, that he and *all his* believed and rejoiced in God. The words are literally, “He rejoiced *ταυοικὲ*, believing in God.” And though the adverb *ταυοικὲ* is *done into* the phrase, “with all his house;” and though, for ordinary purposes, this paraphrase may be sufficiently accurate, this rendering does *not* possess that strict literal accuracy which would be necessary to warrant the inference, that every individual here affirmed to be baptized did actually believe and rejoice in God. Even upon philological grounds, the interpretation which confines the believing in God to the jailer himself, is capable of a solid defence. The context equally confirms this rendering, and puts its propriety beyond a reasonable doubt. It was the jailer himself that “sprang in, and came trembling.” *He* and *he alone* it was that cried, “What must I do to be saved?” So again, “*He* washed their stripes,—*he* brought them into his house,

—*he* set meat before them,—and, finally, *he* rejoiced, &c., believing in God.” The plain truth of the matter appears to be this: the Apostles had said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house ;” or, “and thou and thy house shall be saved ;” he had believed ; and of him it might now be said, as it was said of Zaccheus, “This day is salvation come to thy house.” And considering how great things God had done for him, and for his family, he did, not merely on his own account, but in regard to his family also, rejoice in the God of his salvation. Nor do the words themselves necessarily imply more than this.

The case of Lydia is recorded thus: “A certain woman named Lydia, which worshipped God, heard us ; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us,” &c. (Acts xvi. 14, 15.) Now what right has any man to affirm that Lydia’s family contained no infant child ? none but adult believers in Christ ? Plainly, no right whatever. One feature of this case is remarkable. When *adults* are baptized, we almost invariably hear something about their hearing the word, or repenting, or believing. Whereas, in this case, no mention is made of any but Lydia either worshipping God, or attending to the things spoken by Paul and Silas ; no heart but Lydia’s is here said to have been opened. And yet upon her individual conversion to Christ, not Lydia alone, but, apparently as a matter of course, *her family* also are baptized.

St. Paul “baptized also the household of Stephanas.” And what right has any man to affirm that this household also contained no infant child ? none but converted and adult believers in Christ ? The only pretence alleged is, that St. Paul, speaking of this family on

another occasion, says, "They have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." But the phrase itself imports no more than that the family, as a whole, was distinguished by its kindness and hospitality to the disciples of Christ. And when it is considered that even this was not said of the household of Stephanas until six or eight years *after* it was baptized, the ludicrous gravity of the following comment must appear truly admirable,—"*These ministers to the saints could not be infants!*"

As this is a very favourite mode of argument with those who will not "suffer little children to come to Christ" through the sacrament of baptism, we offer another remark upon it; though in itself the argument is excessively childish. We produce them instances in which a whole family are at once baptized. They endeavour to make it appear that some duty or office is attributed to the members of this family of which *infants* are naturally incapable; and then absurdly jump to the conclusion that in such a family no infant can be included. Now the absolute folly of thus jumping at conclusions may be demonstrated by a single example. Suppose the following had been found *verbatim* in the Scriptures: "In the number of all the males were eight thousand and six hundred, keeping the charge of the sanctuary; and they were all baptized." The answer would of course be this: "*These keepers of the sanctuary could not be infants!*" From the allegation that they were "keeping the charge of the sanctuary," it would be most triumphantly concluded that these must all have been *adults*; and could not possibly have been *infants*. And where is the man at all prejudiced against the baptism of infants who would not have gloried in the success of this reply; and who would not have ridiculed the idea of infants being included

among these *keepers*, even more than the idea of infants being disciples of Christ, or members of his church? But to evince the utter folly and falsehood of all such arguments, we need only read to you the above passage as it actually stands in the Bible. You will find it, Num. iii. 28 : “In the number of all the males, from *a month old* and upward, were eight thousand and six hundred, keeping the charge of the sanctuary.” And thus the very thing that would have excited the utmost ridicule of these very clever reasoners, is found written in the Scripture with the finger of God. But if among those to whom the Scriptures assign the office of “keeping the charge of the sanctuary,” *infants* “from a month old and upward” are undeniably included; why may they not also be included in a family of which it is said in merely general terms, “They have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints?”

Here, then, we leave the matter. Three different cases of family baptism are recorded in the New Testament. In no one of these cases is there the shadow of a pretence for excluding *infants*. In one, at least, it is morally certain that infants were included; and undeniably certain, that if included they were baptized. We repeat it, therefore, that, considered in themselves, these family baptisms are highly important; but that taken in connexion with the established facts, that infant circumcision was a divine ordinance, and that it was the ancient Jewish custom to baptize the infant offspring of their proselytes, they fall but little short of a positive proof that infant baptism was practised by the Lord’s Apostles.

We argue,—

FINALLY, *From the fact that infant baptism appears to have been the universal practice of the Christian church during the first ages; while the practice of*

denying the sacrament of baptism to infants can only be regarded as a novelty of comparatively later times.

For the alleged antiquity of infant baptism, it would be an easy matter to produce "a cloud of witnesses." In fact, a succession of Christian writers, running onward to the very age of the Apostles, both affirm this practice, and argue from it as being the practice of the church of Christ. These testimonies may be seen at large in almost any regular treatise on the subject. But our space is limited, and our quotations must be few.

According to the martyr Cyprian, the question was solemnly referred to a council of sixty-six bishops or ministers at Carthage, "Whether infants might be baptized *before* they were eight days old?" And the council "decided unanimously that no infant is to be prohibited from baptism, although but just born." And this decision was given within about one hundred and fifty years after the death of the Apostles.

Origen, a man of profound learning and extensive information, and born about the year 184, says, "Infants are baptized for the remission of sins." And again: "The church had also from the Apostles an order to give baptism to infants; for they to whom divine mysteries were committed, knew that there was in all persons a natural pollution, which ought to be washed away by water and the Spirit."

Justin Martyr, who wrote about forty years after the death of the Apostles, says: "Several persons among us, both men and women, of sixty or seventy years old, who were *discipled* (or made disciples) to Christ, in or from their infancy, do continue uncorrupt." But there never was any other mode of making disciples from infancy, except by baptism. And the very word used by Justin is that which occurs in the command of Christ to the Apostles; "*Disciple* all nations, baptizing them,"

&c. The testimony of Justin was written within forty years from the death of the Apostles. And seventy years reckoned back from that time, brings us into the time at which the Apostles actually lived and preached.

On the opposite side of the question, we have seen nothing to invalidate the following conclusions of an eminent writer on the subject:—

“First, during the *first four hundred years* from the formation of the Christian church, Tertullian alone urged the delay of baptism to infants, and that only in some cases; and Gregory only delayed it, perhaps, to his own children. But neither any society of men, nor any individual, denied the lawfulness of baptizing infants.

“Secondly, in the *next seven hundred years*, there was not a society nor an individual who even pleaded for this delay; much less any who denied the right, or the duty, of infant baptism.

“Thirdly, in the year 1120, one sect of the Waldenses declared against the baptism of infants; because they supposed them incapable of salvation. But the main body of that people rejected the opinion as heretical; and the sect which held it soon came to nothing.

“Fourthly, the next appearance of this opinion was in the year 1522.”

The first Baptist teacher who had a regular congregation appears to have lived about the year of Christ, 1030. In Germany, the sect arose in the beginning of the *fifteenth century*. And the first Baptist church in England, appears to have been founded between the years 1633 and 1640.

Strange indeed it must appear to the unprejudiced mind, that, upon a subject so interesting, the whole Christian world should have remained in palpable, Egyptian darkness for the first thousand years; and

stranger still, if possible, that during the whole of this protracted night, no day-star should have arisen, "to give light to them that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death." And yet, if the truth involved in this controversy is on the side of those who reject infants from baptism, such must have been the case.

SERMON II.

THE INFANT'S CLAIM ASSERTED AND VINDICATED.

“Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”—Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

ON a former occasion we endeavoured to establish, on the part of *infants*, a scriptural right to the ordinance of Christian baptism. And what we propose on the present occasion is, first, to offer a few remarks in addition to our former argument; and then, secondly, to examine the principal objections urged against this truly catholic and ancient practice.

We argue,—

FIRST, *From the divine institution of infant membership in the church of God.*

If we can establish the church membership of infants, their right to the ordinance of baptism is also established: for baptism will not be denied to be the undoubted privilege of every member of the church. Such being the case, we argue thus:—

If God has once constituted in his church the membership of infants, admitting them by a religious ordinance; and if this primitive appointment of God has never been annulled by divine authority, the membership of infants still remains, and no man has a right to annul it.

The principle of this argument is affirmed by the rebaptizers themselves. For instance, a somewhat

plausible, but very shallow, and not very *honest*, pamphlet, extensively circulated by this party, contains the following :—" A *divine* law must continue obligatory until it is repealed by *divine* authority. There is no intimation in the Scriptures that the law of baptism has been repealed, and therefore there is no reason to suppose its obligation has ceased." Granted. The argument is a good one; but it is ours as well as theirs. We also maintain, that " a *divine* law must be obligatory until it is *repealed* by *divine* authority." And since the divine institution of infant membership in the church of God is so notorious that the most learned antagonist of infant baptism distinctly admits it; (*vide* Tombe's Apology;) and since it is a principle with them to admit nothing in favour of the infant's claim but "express precept or clear example;" they cannot think it unreasonable in us to demand of them *precept* thus express, or *example* thus clear, to prove that this "divine law" has been *repealed* "by divine authority."

That infants did by divine authority and command "enter into covenant with the Lord their God, and into his oath;" that they had a part in the covenant, and a place in the church, of God, from the time of Abraham to the coming of Christ; it would be perfect folly to deny. The membership of infants, then, was plainly established by divine authority. And those who take upon themselves to cast infants out of the church, and rashly to declare these "little ones" *incapable* of such membership, and *incapable* of entering "into covenant with the Lord their God and into his oath;" are bound at least to prove to us that this divine appointment has been *abrogated*. Yes, they are bound to prove this by alleging a *divine authority* as express as that by which this order was established. This, however, we know they will not do. And *they* know it as well. Infants

were by divine right members of the church of God when Christ began his public ministry upon earth; and so far was the Son of God from annulling that right, that he solemnly confirmed and ratified it: for not only did he declare that “of such is the kingdom of God,” but he added also, “Whoso receiveth one such little child in my name receiveth me.”

We argue,—

SECONDLY, *From the fact of infant justification and acceptance by the death of Christ.*

It ought never to be forgotten, and in this controversy especially it ought not to be forgotten, that the effects of the fall upon the condition of the human family are, in the divine economy, inseparably connected with the blessings secured to all by Christ’s atonement and redemption. If “by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation,” it is not less true that “by the obedience of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” Nay, so fully is this the case, that “where sin abounded grace did much more abound.” The doctrine of infant justification, then, is not less clearly the doctrine of holy Scripture than is the doctrine of the fall,—that doctrine which affirms that we are all “by nature children of wrath.” It is, then, a fact, a deeply interesting fact, that infants are really objects of the divine favour; that they are, as infants, “accepted in the Beloved.” As for the myriads who *die* in infancy, we hesitate not to say, “theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” To such the death of Christ secures a glorious, unconditional, eternal life. And as for such as live to years of discretion, their infant justification can never be forfeited until they become chargeable with actual sin.

Now we learn from St. Paul, that “the sign of circumcision” was to Abraham “a seal of righteousness;”

a term which denotes, on the one hand, a solemn consecration to God, and on the other, justification, acceptance, and favour with God. Yes, of these inestimable blessings, "the sign of circumcision was a seal." This *sign* was by divine command applied to the infants of Jewish believers; that is, as a token both of God's favour and compassion for "these little ones" and of their consecration to him. Now the *sign* of baptism is equally "a seal of righteousness," in the sense above explained; that is, it is a divinely appointed token of acceptance in Christ and of consecration to God. And since the infant offspring of Christian parents are, undeniably, not merely heirs, but actual partakers, of this grace, to deny to these accepted "little ones" the appropriate *sign*, is a thing not only unwarranted by any part of God's word, but in itself it amounts to a real absurdity.

FINALLY, *Our argument finds an important confirmation in the general harmony of the divine dispensations.*

God is ONE; and "his understanding is infinite." In all his revealed dispensations, there is not only a grandeur but an unity of design. Besides, a former dispensation is not uncommonly so constituted as to be the type or emblem of another which is to follow. So in the case before us.

The blood of Jewish sacrifices presignified the grand Christian atonement; "the precious blood of Christ," that "blood of the New Testament which is shed for many, for the remission of sins."

The destroying angel's passing over the habitations of Israel in Egypt, prefigured the great salvation of the church: and the Jewish feast of passover, by which they commemorated the deliverance out of Egypt, was an emblem of that holy sacramental rite by which we now commemorate the death of Christ.

There also was a bodily circumcision, to signify the circumcision of the heart; just as baptism, called "the circumcision of Christ," figuratively denotes the cleansing of the soul from sin.

When circumcision was first instituted, that *sign* which Abraham received as "a seal" of his justification by personal faith, *that sign* his infant offspring received also. So when baptism was first instituted, the infant offspring of the adult convert to the faith of Christ appear to have been baptized as well as the parent himself.

So long as the sacrament of circumcision continued to be in force, the infant offspring of Jewish parents continued to be circumcised: because they also were included in God's gracious covenant. And so long as the sacrament of baptism continues to be in force, and to occupy the place of that now obsolete rite, so long ought the infant offspring of Christian parents to be baptized: because it is declared to us, upon divine authority, that "the promise" is unto us and to our *children*; yea, that "of such is the kingdom of God."

Here all is consistent,—all is harmony. Here we have *unity* as well as grandeur of design. There is "wheel within wheel," but every wheel is "full of eyes."

Your attention must now be directed to certain arguments and objections which are urged against our view of the subject, by those who differ from us.

Most of the objections are taken from a pamphlet which professes to have obtained a circulation of some scores of thousands. To those who really wish to form a righteous judgment on the subject, two things will here be necessary: (1.) To keep in mind that nothing can be alleged against the baptism of infants in the shape of *direct* Scripture evidence. Loud and even

vehement as our rebaptizing brethren are in their demands for “express precept or clear example” to warrant the baptism of infants; in vain will you demand of them a particle of such evidence *against* this practice. (2.) Relative to the objections under consideration, the question for you to decide is, Are they of force *fairly sufficient* to outweigh the arguments already advanced in favour of the infant’s claim?

To proceed, then,—

FIRST, Much stress is laid upon the alleged fact, that the only persons affirmed to be baptized by the Apostles, were adults, who heard, repented, and believed.

Now when those who make this allegation shall have proved to us that *the families* baptized by the Apostles really contained none but adult believers in Christ, we will admit what they allege to be a fact; and will dispose of it in the best way that we can. But until they have proved this point, we shall maintain that what they allege as a fact, is but an empty fiction; a groundless, vain, unprovable assumption at the best. That many believing adults were baptized by the Apostles, is true enough. But to argue from *this* fact against the baptism of infants, would be manifestly absurd. The persons in question had plainly arrived at the age of manhood before this divine ordinance was instituted; so that if baptized at all, it must, of sheer necessity, be as adults. But by no rational process can it ever be proved from hence, that either the persons baptized, or the Apostles who baptized them, questioned the validity of infant baptism.

SECONDLY, It is objected, that though infants were more than once brought to Christ that he might bless them, the account of these transactions contains no mention of infant baptism; nor is there any proof that Christ baptized the infants thus brought to him.

We answer, It is a matter of dispute whether Christ himself baptized at all, either infants or adults. Besides, the time was obviously not yet come. The command to disciple all nations, by baptizing them in the name of the adorable Trinity, and teaching them to observe the ordinances of Christ, was not yet given. In fact, the Jewish church was still the church of God; and into that these infants had been already initiated.

THIRDLY, It has been argued with great solemnity, that "our adorable Lord was baptized, not in infancy, but when he 'began to be about thirty years of age.'"

Here it is sufficient to answer, that when Christ was an infant the ordinance of Christian baptism had no existence. Nay, even the baptism of John, which certainly preceded that Christian ordinance, was not instituted until Jesus "began to be about thirty years of age." Taken in connexion with the visible descent of the Holy Ghost, and the voice from heaven with which it was accompanied, this baptism was probably designed to be a grand public demonstration to Israel, that Jesus was indeed the divine Messiah, the Son of God. But connexion with the subject now under discussion, this solemn event has probably none whatever.

It is of much more real importance to remark, that when Christ was an infant, the only church communion sanctioned by divine authority was the Jewish; that the divinely appointed mode of reception into that church was by the rite of circumcision, the seal of the covenant; and that the infant Jesus was thus circumcised when only eight days old. Yes, thus was Jesus in his infancy solemnly initiated into that church of which his parents were themselves devoted members; and that, too, by the only sacramental rite which God had ever up to that day instituted for such a purpose.

Let no pious parent be either afraid or backward to imitate this devout example.

FOURTHLY, It is said there is no *express* command nor any *clear* example in the Scripture to warrant the baptism of infants; whereas without such warrant infants ought not to be baptized.

Our answer is, (1.) There is no express command nor any clear example in the Scripture to warrant the rejection of infants from baptism; whereas without such warrant they ought not to be rejected. We certainly have a clearer right to demand from them that oppose us an express prohibition of infant baptism, than they have to demand of us an express and positive precept in its favour. The reasons of this have been assigned already. At the coming of Christ, the infants of God's people were *in* the church, the covenant, and the oath of God; and they received in infancy the appointed *sign* of covenant relationship. All this, too, by the law of God, written, express, and unrepealed. Now if, as we maintain, the spiritual standing of the infants of God's people remains the same, in these respects, as it was from the beginning, there needed no new precept on the subject. But if that divine law by which infants were placed within the church and ordered to receive the covenant sign, was really now to be abrogated, the change was such as to demand a precept clear and unambiguous: for the objectors themselves have taught us, that "a *divine* law must continue obligatory until it is repealed by *divine* authority." For the church membership and covenant signing of the infants of God's people, we have produced the "divine law;" and until some one can produce the *divine repeal* of this law, we must maintain that to unchurch these infants, and deny to them the covenant sign, is rashly to innovate upon the essential princi-

ples of that divine constitution which God himself has given to his church. Besides,

(2.) This argument is good for nothing because it proves too much. For instance, there is no express command in the New Testament, nor any clear example either, for administering the sacrament of the Lord's supper to a woman. In no part of Scripture is this either commanded or expressly permitted; nor can it be proved that the Apostles did in any one instance administer this ordinance to a woman. But if our opponents demand of us express precept or clear example to warrant the baptism of infants, what right have they, without such warrant, to admit women to the Lord's table? We challenge them to produce either express precept or clear example from the Scriptures to warrant such a practice. In fact, both these practices are scriptural; but the Scriptures warrant female communion only in the same manner, and not fully to the same extent, as they warrant infant baptism. The proof is of the *same kind* in both cases; but it is fuller and more conclusive in favour of infant baptism than of female communion.

FIFTHLY, It is said, "Infant baptism is a useless ceremony; but God institutes no useless ceremonies:" therefore, infant baptism cannot be of God.

We reply, it is an easy matter enough for human folly and impudence to assert that infant baptism is a useless ceremony. But every argument employed to prove this bold assertion, will prove as fully that infant circumcision was a useless ceremony; and yet God instituted that. Nor can it ever be proved that infant baptism is not an efficient means of grace and blessing, both to the parent and to the child; to one a solemn duty, and to both a real privilege. Besides which it is a solemn public acknowledgment of the fact, that all

mankind are born in sin; that even *infancy* itself requires to be regenerated; and that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Still it is urged, Children who were baptized in *infancy* "manifest the same depravity of nature as those who were not baptized;" and in respect of moral qualities are no better than others. We answer; Adult Christians, who have been dipped since they became adults, are no better than other Christians who were never dipped at all; therefore, adult dipping is, in this respect, as utterly useless a thing as infant baptism.

The truth is, that if infant baptism must be laid aside on this account, so must adult baptism also; for there is no more saving efficacy in the one than in the other. With all our respect for them, we cannot concede to those who practise dipping, that they are more holy than other Christians; nor would we insinuate that in general they are less so. We have known some of them who were very good Christians before they were dipped; and some who were no better than they should be even after they were dipped. So far as spirit and temper are concerned, we know of none who have been made *better* by this process; but we have known a few who were so much altered for the worse, in these respects, that we incline to the opinion that even Christian spirits, when they have once been "under the water," are rather apt to *turn sour*.*

* "Did you not say in your sermon, that some of those who have been dipped are become so sour, that one might imagine they had been dipped in *vinegar and gall*?" We did. But this was never "in the brief." Nor was it said of the immersionists generally. And though several persons have remarked to us that they were really struck with the *truthfulness* of the idea, the expression is, of course, discarded. And we cheerfully acknowledge that some of the *kindest* spirits we have ever met with, as well as some of the *sourest*, were persons of what is called the Baptist persuasion.

SIXTHLY, With still more confidence it is argued, that the divinely specified qualifications for Christian baptism imply both duties and attainments of which infants are absolutely incapable : that, therefore, since they cannot possess the qualification, they must be excluded from the ordinance. For instance, the Apostle St. Peter said, "Repent ye, and be baptized." And to the eunuch, Philip said, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest," &c. The Baptist's argument runs thus : Repentance and faith are necessary to qualify for Christian baptism ; but *infants* cannot repent and believe ; therefore infants ought not to be baptized. To which we answer,

(1.) All that the Scriptures affirm on this point, manifestly relates to unbaptized adults. But to conclude that because repentance and faith are necessary to qualify *adults* for baptism, therefore *infants* must not be baptized because *they* cannot repent and believe, is so glaring a sophism, that one cannot but wonder at the solemnity with which it has been urged. Most assuredly, whatever may be, or may not be, necessary to qualify *adults* for baptism, is quite beyond the question in dispute ; and can prove nothing, either for or against the *infant* candidate. Besides,

(2.) This argument also is plainly good for nothing, because it proves too much. Our zealous but short-sighted objector argues thus :—Repentance is necessary to qualify for baptism : but infants cannot repent ; therefore infants ought not to be baptized. Faith in Christ is necessary to qualify for baptism : but infants cannot have faith in Christ ; therefore infants ought not to be baptized. Thus far the objector goes, and even glories in the strength of his position. At this point, however, another takes up the argument, and thus triumphantly proceeds :—The Scriptures declare, "He that believeth

shall be saved :” but infants cannot believe ; therefore infants cannot be saved. The Scriptures testify, “ Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish :” but infants cannot repent ; therefore all who *die* in infancy must perish. Again : the Scriptures solemnly declare, “ He that believeth not shall be damned :” but infants cannot believe ; therefore all who die in infancy must be damned.

Now that the odious advocate for infant damnation is as correct and logical in his conclusions as the opposer of infant baptism is, it would be the merest madness to deny. For certainly if the argument is good in one case, it is as good in the other ; and if it will prove that infants ought not to be baptized, it will as certainly prove that those who die in infancy cannot be saved. Will the objector admit this as a proof that none who die in infancy can be saved ? No, he will not. But in rejecting the argument by which this terrible position has been demonstrated, he is in fact demolishing his strongest and most favourite argument against the baptism of infants. Indeed the only rational reply that a Baptist could make to such an opponent would be this : Though these Scriptures demonstrate that both repentance and faith are necessary to the salvation of an *adult*, they conclude *nothing*, they prove *nothing*, either for or against the salvation of *infants* ; they have, in fact, nothing at all to do with the question. And this is exactly our reply to the objector himself. We tell him, without fear of successful contradiction, that whatever may or may not be necessary to qualify an adult for baptism, is quite beyond the question in dispute ; and will prove nothing for or against the right of infants to this Christian sacrament.

SEVENTHLY, It has been argued, “ The religion of the New Testament is *essentially a voluntary service* ; but

infant baptism is *a compulsory ceremony*:" therefore infant baptism is essentially repugnant to the religion of the New Testament.

To this we answer, That infant baptism is, in any sound sense of the terms, "*a compulsory ceremony*," would be rather difficult to prove. True, the infant cannot be said *to will*, in this case; but, for the same reason, neither can it be said *to nill*. To talk about *compulsion* is, therefore, manifestly absurd. Besides, though it is a divine ordinance, and is, as such, entitled to all reverence, baptism is very far from being one of the most *essential* parts of the religion of the New Testament. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." And, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." Those who disparage this ordinance are guilty of a serious error; nor do they act a much wiser part who set themselves to prove, that "the Scriptures attach *more importance to baptism* than to the Lord's supper." But to make what some are pleased to call "*the cross and shame of the Lord's baptism*," that is, the cross and shame of a public dipping, an essential part of the religion of Christ, is an outrage upon common sense.

Besides, this argument also is worthless, because, like several of the preceding ones, it proves too much. For instance, one very important part of the religion of Christ requires that parents should bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" and also that children should obey their parents "in all things, in the Lord." It is, however, a lamentable fact, that too many children refuse to yield a willing obedience. They are undutiful, self-willed, and stubborn. Still, according to this logic, the juvenile rebels must

never be compelled to do their duty ; because, forsooth, “the religion of the New Testament is essentially a voluntarily service.”

EIGHTHLY, The religion of Christ, it is said, is “spiritual and personal :” to persons born of God “belong the right of being the children of God ; and on the ground of this spiritual birth they are entitled to spiritual privileges.” But infant baptism is practised, “not on the ground of spiritual, but of carnal birth ;” and is, therefore, wrong.

Answer, (1.) We flatly deny that infant baptism is practised merely “on the ground of carnal birth.” On the contrary, we maintain that infants are personally accepted in Christ, and that their spiritual relationship to Christ is strongly and expressly affirmed in holy Scripture. For not only has Christ affirmed that “of such is the kingdom of God,” but so fully has he identified himself with them as likewise to declare, “Whoso receiveth one such little child in my name, receiveth me.” And it is on the ground of this spiritual relationship chiefly, that we have pleaded the right of infants to the ordinance of baptism.

(2.) The spiritual relationship of infants to Christ is plainly such as does, in the judgment of God, entitle them to spiritual privileges, even of the highest and most glorious kind. Yes ; theirs is the kingdom of heaven,—the kingdom of glory and bliss. Now if the spiritual relationship of infants to Christ is really such as to entitle them to the highest privileges of his redeemed in glory, how absurd, how utterly preposterous, it is, to deny that that relationship is such as to entitle them to the much lower privilege of Christian baptism. But,

(3.) The *principle* of this objection may be turned with much more fatal effect upon the objector himself.

The principle of the objection is, That being born of God, and accepted of him, entitles the subject to all the spiritual privileges of God's children; of which baptism is one. Now, since it is a fact that millions *die* in infancy, the question is, Are these millions saved, or do they perish? Are they received into heaven, or are they doomed to hell? If any man will affirm that these are lost, we must "let him alone." But if the objector admits that "these little ones" are saved, and that heaven is their home, he necessarily admits, by implication, that before they die they are *born of the Spirit*, born from above; and are thereby entitled to the spiritual privileges of the children of God, of which baptism is supposed to be one. And so far as these millions are concerned, there plainly is no alternative, but either they must be baptized in infancy, or they must remain so many exceptions to the rule affirmed by Christ, namely: "Except a man be born of *water* and of the *Spirit*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

FINALLY, It has been asked, If infants are really members of the church of Christ, why are they not, as they grow up, invariably treated as such; and as a matter of course admitted to all the privileges of church membership?

This question may be answered, in part, by asking another. How comes it to pass, then, that while infants, as such, are generally admitted to stand in a saving relationship to Christ and to his glorious kingdom, the mass of those who live to years of maturity become so utterly unfit for that kingdom, that except they repent they must "all likewise perish?" The reason in both cases is obviously this:—that actual transgression or criminal neglect has changed, entirely changed, the relation of the parties to God, to his covenant, to his church, and to eternity. As for such children as were

baptized in infancy, and have feared the Lord from their youth up, they still are members of Christ's universal church; and they are scripturally entitled to every church privilege that is adapted to their age and capacity; provided only that they desire and seek admission to such privileges in a proper manner.

In conclusion, we maintain, therefore, that the truly ancient practice of infant baptism is perfectly consistent both with Scripture and reason; perfectly consistent with both the letter and the spirit of the divine economy, and with the practice of the Lord's Apostles; that infants ought to be baptized; and that it is "meet, right, and the bounden duty" of pious parents, to dedicate their infants to God by baptism, and thenceforth, from the earliest possible period, to train them up "*in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*" Let this service be performed in the spirit of devotion, and faith, and piety; and however much a perverted ingenuity may be able to cavil at the ordinance, it can never be "in vain in the Lord."

First, *To the infants*, it is a public and official recognition of their interest in Christ, and in the blessings of his redemption. It is a solemn public recognition of the fact, that "of such is the kingdom of God." To them it doubtless will convey a blessing from the Lord. It is his own appointed mode of bringing them to him, that he may take them "into his arms, put his hands upon them, and BLESS them."

Secondly, *To the parents*, it is the discharge of a solemn obligation; a *sacramental dedication* of their offspring to the Lord. Some who are strongly opposed to infant baptism, are so fully convinced of the propriety of such a dedication, that they would have their children publicly devoted to God in the presence of his church. To such a dedication none but an infidel can object; and

we believe the only authorized mode of doing this is by baptism, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The obligation and the practice, too, are as old as the covenant with Abraham; only the *sign* has been changed. God's ancient people dedicated their children to him by circumcision; we dedicate ours by baptism.

There is, moreover, on the part of parents, a solemn public engagement to train up their children in the faith, the knowledge, the obedience of Christ. All parents are under a natural, yea, under a divine, obligation to do this. But these come under a solemn, conventional, sacramental pledge; they pledge themselves alike to God and to his church. The Lord will "look upon it, and require it." The church, too, has a right "to look upon it, and to require it."

Thirdly, *The church* is henceforth bound to consider "these little ones" as within its pale; bound to watch for their souls; earnestly and assiduously to seek their spiritual and eternal welfare; and especially to make every suitable provision for their spiritual training. Education, in regard to these, is as much the duty of the church, as public preaching is in reference to adults. And the economy of a Christian church can never be regarded as being complete, until there shall be found within the circle of its arrangements some means of spiritual training adapted to every capacity and to every age,—from "the infant of days" to the most venerable for years.

SERMON III.

THE DIVINE VALIDITY OF BAPTISM AS ADMINISTERED
BY POURING OR SPRINKLING.

“Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”—Matt. xxviii. 19.

THUS far we have endeavoured to establish, on behalf of infants, a scriptural right to the ordinance of Christian baptism. We now proceed to examine the arguments by which it is attempted to be proved, that DIPPING, OR IMMERSION, *is the only scriptural mode of baptism.*

The immersionists maintain, that unless a person be actually *dipped, immersed, or plunged* in water, he is not baptized. They do not merely affirm that such a mode of baptism is proper, or warranted by Scripture: they affirm that the word of God allows *no other* mode; and they maintain “that those who have been *sprinkled* only have not been *baptized*; and that to practise sprinkling instead of immersion, *is to set aside the law of God.*” The question is, Is this position true, or is it false? We consider it to be false; and shall proceed at once to state our reasons. We feel assured, then, that the position to which we object cannot be proved,—

FIRST, *By any word that is employed in Scripture to denote the Christian baptism.*

The immersionists lay the stress of their argument upon the Greek verbs βαπτω (*bapto*) and βαπτίζω (*baptizo*). *Bapto* is the strongest and most definite in signification; *baptizo* is derived from *bapto*. For the

present we shall take the latter, because it is the strongest term, and that from which the other is derived: and because we believe it will be admitted, that if this word will not prove the point in question, it cannot be proved by any other. Now that the Greek *bapto* is used to signify that which is done by dipping or immersion, may be granted; but that the *primary meaning* of the word is to dip or to immerse, though it has often been asserted, has never yet been proved. Others maintain that "the radical meaning" of *bapto* is "to *tinge* or *imbue*;" and it is certainly used in the sense of, "to tinge, to stain, to dye," but without reference to any specific *mode* of producing this effect. The word is also used in connexion with *water*, with *blood*, and with *paint*, as the element by which the baptism is accomplished.

That *bapto* does not always and of necessity imply *dipping* or *plunging*, is quite demonstrable. Many proofs of this have been collected from the Greek writers by learned men. The following are a specimen. Homer speaks of a lake of water being "*stained* ($\epsilon\beta\alpha\pi\tau\epsilon\tau\omicron$) with the blood of a frog." Aristophanes speaks of a man "*staining* or *smearing* ($\beta\alpha\pi\tau\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$) his face with tawny colours." Aristotle speaks of a certain substance which, "being rubbed or squeezed, *stains* ($\beta\alpha\pi\tau\epsilon\iota$) the hand." And twice, according to the Greek version of the Old Testament, the prophet Daniel says of the maniac king of Babylon, that his dwelling was with the wild beast of the field, and his body was *wet* ($\epsilon\beta\alpha\phi\eta$) with the dew of heaven." In each of these instances, the word employed is *bapto*; the word which some would have us to believe invariably signifies, or at least necessarily implies, to *dip*, to *immerse*, to *plunge*.

Now as to Nebuchadnezzar, he was plainly baptized or *wetted*, not by being dipped in the dew of heaven, but by the dew descending, falling, or being distilled upon

him. The *hand*, in the above instance, was evidently baptized or *stained*, not by being dipped or plunged, but by a very different process. The *face*, in another of these instances, was baptized or coloured, not surely by being dipped into a pot of paint. And whether Homer's lake of water was baptized, or *stained*, by being dipped into the blood of a frog, or by having the blood of that animal shed, or poured, or sprinkled into it, is a point which common sense will easily decide.

This is sufficient to prove that the Greek *bapto* can decide nothing in favour of dipping as the *exclusive* mode of baptism. In fact, this word is no better an authority for dipping than it is for washing, sprinkling, or pouring; and it will no more determine in what particular way the water of baptism must be applied, than it will determine how much or how little, how hot or how cold. As already remarked, the word *baptizo* is derived from *bapto*, and is even still less definite in its signification.

It is, then, certain, that the strongest and most definite term that can be appealed to in defence of dipping, is one which sanctions equally a considerable *variety* of modes, as washing, shedding, sprinkling, pouring. But this circumstance alone is fatal, absolutely fatal, to the immersionist theory. For had it been the divine intention absolutely to confine the whole world to *one* specific mode of baptism and to allow of *no other*, to suppose that the matter would have been left thus open and undecided, is a supposition both absurd in itself and dishonourable to God.

The position to which we object cannot be established,—

SECONDLY, *By any FACT or FACTS recorded in the Scriptures.*

In proof of this we maintain, that not a single case

can be produced from Scripture to make it at all *clear*, and *certain*, and indisputable, that baptism was administered by *dipping or immersion*. It must be kept in mind that the object of the immersionist is, not merely to justify an opinion, but to establish *a rule*, which shall be religiously binding upon the consciences of men. Now to establish such a rule, a merely *probable* case will never suffice. Whether a case of even undoubted immersion would suffice for this purpose, is a question which we moot not now. But candid men will allow that, to be of any value here, the case, the instance demanded, must be one concerning which there can be no uncertainty. In favour of immersion it is pleaded,—

(1.) That John baptized in Enon, “because there was much water there.” Now that John should select as the place of his ministry, a place of “many and great waters,” for no other reason than that he might have water enough in which to dip his converts, is certainly an assumption which will not bear to be looked at very seriously; but it is rendered still more incredible by the fact, that in Jerusalem itself, where no such waters existed, the Apostles *baptized* THREE THOUSAND in one day.

As to the locality, the idea of *rivers*, or *lakes*, or even extensive pools of water, ought to be at once discarded; because it cannot be proved that there either *is* or ever was, any *such* waters “in Enon, near to Salim.” The words are literally, “many waters.” As to the character and extent of these waters, Enon signifies, according to some, “the fountain of On,” according to others, “the place of springs.” A circumstance remarkable enough, when spoken concerning a part of “the wilderness of Judea” as the preaching station of John the Baptist; but a poor foundation on which to build the inference that John must certainly have been *an immerser*. The truth of

the matter is, that if John had neither *dipped* the people nor *sprinkled* them, but simply preached to them the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, some such place as this would have been really necessary: because such were the multitudes who came out to hear him, that it must have been impossible for them to subsist, even for a day together, in any place where water was not tolerably plentiful.

Besides, "There went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him." Now to make John the *dipper* of these prodigious multitudes, is to assign him a task which cannot but be deemed to be an almost absolute impossibility.

Finally, the testimony of John himself is palpably against this foolish notion: "I baptize you *with water*, He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." Here are two baptisms, both affirmed to be administered in the same manner; the first, "with water," the second, "with the Holy Ghost." Now if there is a doubt as to the manner in which John baptized with water, there is none, there can be none, as to the manner in which Christ baptized *with* the Holy Ghost. And it is a maxim of universal authority in logic, to argue from what is clear and evident to what is more uncertain and obscure. Fortunately, we do know how Jesus baptized *with* the Holy Ghost; that is, by effusion, shedding, or pouring; and this fact renders it pretty certain that after the same manner John also baptized *with* water.

(2.) In favour of immersion it is pleaded, That John baptized "*in* Jordan." To find the real value of this proof it must be kept in mind that, even in the New Testament, the Greek particle here translated *in*, is more than a hundred times over translated *at*. We

have, then, the highest and most venerable authority for affirming, that *at* Jordan is as correct a rendering of the original as *in* Jordan. And thus the proof has vanished. Again, it is recorded of Christ, at his baptism, that he “went up out of the water;” and of Philip and the eunuch, that “they went down both *into* the water,—came up *out of* the water.” But here also the fact is notorious, and the immersionists know it to be so, that the words rendered *into* and *out of* are frequently used to signify *to* and *from* simply. Of the first we have an instance, John xx. 4, 5: John “came first *to* the sepulchre,—yet went he not *in*.” Acts xii. 10, is an instance of the second: ‘The angel departed *from* him,’ not *out of* him. The words, therefore, do not necessarily signify any more than *to* the water and *from* the water. In fact the immersionists themselves know very well that these expressions will not even prove that any one of these parties was *in* the water at all, in the strict sense of the word.

But it is demanded of us, in a tone of defiance, “Can an instance be produced from history of people going into a river for the purpose of being *sprinkled*? Do those who *sprinkle* in the present day ever go into a river for that purpose?” We answer, the customs of this country, “in the present day,” are but a sorry criterion by which to form an opinion as to the customs of Judea almost two thousand years ago. We have, however, a case sufficiently in point. For instance, Mr. Wolfe, the distinguished modern traveller and Missionary, found in Mesopotamia a Christian sect who profess to be imitators of John the Baptist, particularly in regard to baptism. The manner in which they administer this ordinance is thus described: “The priests or bishop baptize children thirty days old. They take the child to the banks of the river; a relative

or friend holds the child near the surface of the water, while the priest sprinkles the element upon the child, and with prayers they name the child." Here, then, is an instance of river baptism by *sprinkling*. These people baptize in a river, because they say so did John; they baptize *infants*; and they baptize, not by immersion, but by pouring or sprinkling water upon the child. Now, keeping these points in view, we venture to affirm that there is not one word said in the New Testament of John baptizing *in* Jordan, or of Philip and the eunuch going down *into* the water and coming up *out of* the water, which might not have been said by the same writers, as a mere matter of course, if these Scripture baptisms had been performed exactly in the manner above described.

To say the very least, then, there is *no proof* that John baptized by immersion; much less is there that *clear, indisputable kind* of proof which alone could warrant any man to affirm positively that John did so baptize.

What, then, is the real state of the case? "I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say." There are a few things in the New Testament which, at first sight, might seem to favour the supposition that baptism was administered, in some cases, by immersion. But these can be explained on our own principles, without any violence, either to the proprieties of language, or to the customs of the people among whom they took place. It follows, that though these circumstances may be sufficient to justify *an opinion*, they can never establish *a fact*. No, even if they stood uncontradicted and unopposed by a single particle of contrary evidence, they would never prove it to be a fact, nor warrant any man to affirm, that baptism was administered by immersion.

But, on the other hand, there are facts which stand

out against the notion of dipping, and which seem to render it, not only improbable, but even impossible and absurd. We have already seen this in the case of John the Baptist. Then as to the *three thousand* on the day of Pentecost. If John must needs select for his ministry “a place of many and great waters,” for no other reason than that he might have water enough wherein to *dip* his converts, where, in the total absence of any such waters, were these thousands *dipped*? Then again, they were a mixed multitude suddenly called together from all quarters. To suppose that, under such circumstances, they came provided with garments in which to be dipped, is a sheer extravagance; to suppose that they were dipped in their ordinary clothes, is not a wit less foolish; to suppose such a mixed multitude of men and women were dipped naked, is the most monstrous supposition of all.

Try a different supposition. Let us suppose this rite to have been performed according to the divinely appointed Jewish mode of purifying, a mode of baptism with which the Apostles could not but be familiar. The law ordained that the *water* of separation should be “*sprinkled* upon the unclean.” And the Jewish writers maintain, in reference to this ordinance, that if a hundred persons were to be purified at once, and if a drop of the water fell upon each, it was sufficient; yea, that whosoever the sprinkled water touched, he was “clean every whit.” To some such mode the Apostles would be naturally directed, not only by their own religious customs, but by their own prophetic Scriptures: thus; “So shall he *sprinkle* many nations.—Then will I *sprinkle* clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.” Let this supposition be weighed against that of *total immersion*, in regard to these *three thousand*, and let unbiassed reason tell us which is most likely to be true.

Now, with so little to favour the notion of dipping, and so much to render that notion, not only improbable, but even impossible and absurd, we feel warranted to affirm, and do affirm, that *not a single instance can be produced from Scripture to make it at all CLEAR, and CERTAIN, and indisputable, that baptism was administered by DIPPING or IMMERSION* ; while instances *by thousands* can be produced, in which it is infinitely more probable that baptism was administered *by pouring or sprinkling*.

We maintain,—

THIRDLY, *That, even if it could be produced, an instance of unquestionable dipping or immersion would be utterly insufficient to sustain the immersionist theory.*

This point is worthy of distinct consideration. Even if it could be proved to absolute certainty that some one of the Apostles, for instance, baptized by dipping, (a thing which never was proved yet, and never will be,) or could an instance be produced from Scripture in which it is plain to absolute certainty that baptism was administered by dipping, (though such an instance was never yet produced, and never can be,) yet even this would fall far short of proving what the immersionists are bound to prove. Such a fact would indeed prove that, in certain cases, to dip is *not wrong* ; but it would never prove that every other mode of baptism *is wrong*. The man who affirms that it would, must be profoundly ignorant, both of the Scriptures and of the very first principles of sound reasoning. Bigots ought to be reminded, that there are matters of quite as much importance as the particular mode of applying the water in baptism, in which the Scriptures plainly sanction *different modes* of administration. And it is obvious that, in such cases, to prove that one mode is right will not necessarily prove that another is wrong. Our own opinion is, that the matter in question has been de-

signedly so left by the wisdom of God, that the particular mode may be innocently adapted to different circumstances, and climes, and countries. And looking at the whole case as it is contained in holy Scripture, even were we compelled to admit that the practice of immersion is *a good one*, we should feel perfectly at liberty to maintain that, in our circumstances, the practice of pouring or sprinkling is *far better*.

Some pious people have been made to believe that by being dipped they have acted over again the burial and resurrection of Christ; and immersion is pleaded for by some as a laudable representation of these solemn events. We have witnessed an immersion; and have frequently thought of the burial and resurrection of Christ. But wherein lies the resemblance between the two, we have never yet been able to discover. If a person could go down into the water, and remain under it for some reasonable time, say even for half an hour, and then rise up with something of that dignified composure which marked the conduct of the rising God; a lively imagination might possibly find out some such resemblance as that here alleged. But that a man who has just popped his head under the water, and instantly, as if something had bitten him, come scrambling out again, —that such a man should be taught solemnly to believe that he has creditably, and even meritoriously, acted over again the burial and resurrection of Christ, is a truly mournful consideration.

It is quite true that the Scripture phrase “buried with him in baptism,” is supposed by some very respectable authorities to contain an allusion to baptism by immersion; but others not less entitled to respect deny that here is any such allusion at all; and maintain that the burying and the resurrection spoken of in such Scriptures are alike moral and spiritual. Among people

of rank, the Jewish mode of burial was to “hew out a sepulchre on high, a habitation in a rock.” And such appears to have been the tomb of Joseph, the burial-place of Christ: “They laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.” (Mark xv. 46.) In what then lies the resemblance between the burial and the resurrection of Christ and a modern immersion?

We conclude this part of the subject by a general argument which has been stated thus:—“*No circumstances can be necessary to the validity of a divine ordinance excepting those which God has commanded in his word: but God has not commanded immersion in his word; therefore, it is not necessary to the validity of the ordinance of baptism.*”

The writer from whom we quote observes, with great justice: “The first of these propositions is admitted by all Protestant denominations, and cannot be denied by any one who does not hold the following absurd positions:—that the word of God is an insufficient guide for man; that uninspired men may add to this revelation; and that whatever any uninspired men may choose to add, all other men must subsequently observe on pain of eternal perdition.” That God has not commanded dipping in his word, has been proved already: for it has been proved that the strongest and most definite word that can be appealed to in defence of this practice, is one which sanctions equally a considerable *variety* of modes. So that to affirm that immersion is essential to the validity of baptism, is to affirm that to be essential which God has nowhere commanded. It is, in fact, a flagrant addition to the word of God.

Here, then, we might conclude. For when it is considered that the immersionists can produce no clear *command* for dipping, and cannot even produce an

instance out of Scripture in which it is at all certain that baptism was administered after such a manner, for them to affirm that immersion is, not merely a lawful practice, but that it is *essential to the validity* of this divine ordinance, can only be characterized as a piece of sheer effrontery. But besides this evident want of all proof in favour of the position affirmed by the immersionists, there is, as we shall now endeavour to evince,—

FOURTHLY, *Strong and conclusive evidence against it, and in favour of our own more simple mode.*

And here we shall endeavour clearly to ascertain in what sense the inspired writers of the New Testament employ the verb βαπτίζω (*baptizo*), the term by which they designate the Christian baptism. We deny that even the *primary* signification of this word is in favour of the immersionist theory. But even if this point were decided against us, the only question of real importance would still remain untouched; and that is, In what sense do the *sacred writers* use the term? And we believe it will be proved, that these writers employ the word to express, not the act of immersion, but that of washing, pouring, or sprinkling.

(1.) In Luke xi. 38, we are told that the Pharisee by whom the Lord was invited to dine, “*marvelled that he had not first washed* (εβαπτισθη, *baptized*) before dinner.” Now, did the Pharisee marvel because Christ did not *immerse* or plunge himself in water? Most assuredly not: for it is plain, from other Scriptures, that these baptisms of the Jews before meals amounted to no more than *washing* “*their hands.*” But if one who has merely washed his hands is properly said to have baptized, (and this is the fact,) to affirm that no man has been baptized unless his whole body has been plunged under water, is manifestly false.

(2.) Again, “The Pharisees, and all the Jews,

except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not." (Mark vii. 3, 4.) Here we have the phrases, "they wash their hands," and "they wash." But though *wash* occurs in both these instances, two different words are used in the original. The word rendered *wash*, in the first instance, is *νιπτω* (*nipto*), "I wet, I dash with water, I wash." In the second instance, the word rendered *wash* is *βαπτίζω* (*baptizo*), "I baptize." Thus then, according to this Scripture, the individual was baptized when his hands alone had been washed, or wetted, or dashed with water. So much is plain. But if, in the judgment of the inspired writer, thus to apply water to the hands alone is to baptize the man, it follows that thus to apply water to the face alone, is no less truly and properly *baptism*.

In this passage we have also a positive proof, that NIPTO, *I wash*, and BAPTIZO, *I baptize*, signify the same thing, and are used indiscriminately for each other. The inference is plain, viz., that *washing* is *baptizing* in whatever way it is done.

(3.) From Mark vii. 4, we learn farther, that among other customs superstitiously held by the Jews, were "the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and tables or beds." In the original it is *baptisms* of cups, &c. This is not to be understood of washing for the ordinary purposes of cleanliness, but of what was practised from motives of superstition; for in the former sense such washing is held to be necessary by all civilized people. Now there is no proof that these cups, pots, and brazen vessels were invariably baptized by *dipping*; and as for tables or beds, the idea of their being baptized by immersion is so absurd, that no man will ever defend it who has not a favourite theory to support.

(4.) In 1 Cor. x. 2, it is said that the children of

Israel "were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." Now to affirm that all these were immersed or plunged in the sea, would be to affirm what is obviously false in fact; and it would be to contradict the inspired penman, who affirms that they went through "upon the dry ground." But by a very natural process, and without any miracle, they might be sprinkled by the waters of the sea, or by the rain from heaven. And the inspired Psalmist, describing the memorable passage of the Red Sea, has these words: "The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid, &c. The clouds poured out water." Again, in no common-sense use of the terms could the people be *dipped* or *plunged* in a cloud; but how they might be *baptized* by water descending from the cloud, is a thing quite as easy to be comprehended; especially as it is said in one place, they "were *under* the cloud;" and, in another, "the clouds *poured* out water."

(5.) Again: according to St. Paul, the Jewish economy was "a figure for the time then present. . . . which stood in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances." (Heb. ix. 9, 10.) In the original it is "*divers baptisms*." Upon this we offer two remarks.

First, Among this variety of baptisms, the whole economy does not furnish a single instance of one person baptizing another by *dipping* or *plunging*; but it contains many instances of such baptism by pouring or *sprinkling*. Secondly, the baptisms to which St. Paul more particularly refers in the context, are manifestly of this latter description. Instance: "The blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, *sprinkling* the unclean.—He took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and *sprinkled* both the book and all the people.—Moreover he *sprinkled* with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels." (Heb. ix. 13, 19, 21.

Compare Exod. xxiv. 8, with Num. xix. 18, 19.) Thus does the Apostle specify some of those "*divers baptisms*" of which he treats. And among these "*divers baptisms*," he most unquestionably classes those which were undeniably performed by sprinkling, and in which immersion is absolutely out of the question. Now if, in the judgment of the Holy Ghost, *the sprinkling of blood* is truly and properly a baptism, (and such is the fact,) so also, by undeniable consequence, is *the sprinkling of water*.

Perhaps no single case could furnish a better illustration of these "*divers baptisms*" than Num. xix. 17—19. Here we have (1.) the baptism of tents and vessels:—"He shall *sprinkle* the water upon the *tent*, and upon all the *vessels*:" a fact which throws some light upon what our Lord says of "the baptisms of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels, and tables." (2.) The baptism of one person by another:—"He shall *sprinkle* it upon all the *persons* that were there." (3.) A baptism which might seem to imply *immersion*, dipping, or plunging:—"And he shall *bathe himself* in water." But it must be observed, that though one person might baptize another by *sprinkling*, when an *immersion* is to take place, the law of decency must be strictly observed; and, as propriety would dictate in all such cases, the individual is commanded to "*bathe himself*." What a contrast to the modern mode of dipping! The alleged indecency of this practice is a point on which we will not dwell; because we would not willingly offend or grieve the parties from whom we differ in opinion. We must, however, remark upon this practice, that the publicity given to such exhibitions, the stir that is made about them, the evident anxiety to render them as notorious as possible, and the claptrap character too often given to the whole affair, present a melancholy, but an instructive, contrast to the spirit and order

of these divine appointments. So long as the rites of purification can be performed by sprinkling or pouring, *an administrator* is employed; but no sooner does an immersion become necessary, than the command, the precept, takes a different form: "Let him *bathe himself*."

After all, it must be kept in mind that baptism is a divinely instituted *symbol*; an outward and visible sign of that inward and spiritual grace in which the Gospel dispensation is so gloriously rich. The connexion between the administration of this sacrament and the giving of the Holy Ghost, is too distinctly marked in holy Scripture to be easily lost sight of. The one is manifestly a divinely appointed emblem of the other; and hence it is natural to expect that the resemblance between the two will be striking and unimpeachable; that the baptism with water will be really significant of the baptism with the Holy Ghost, and will symbolize with it, both as to its nature and its mode of application. This consideration is of vital importance to a correct understanding of the subject; and must be treated of accordingly.

If it can be proved that the Spirit of God has employed the word βαπτίζω (*baptizo*) to denote that which was performed by shedding, sprinkling, or pouring upon, every unprejudiced Christian mind will say it is enough. "Let God be true and every man a liar." We cannot be wrong in attaching *that* meaning to a word which the Holy Ghost attaches to it. Nay, to set up any merely human interpretation in opposition to the interpretation of the Holy Ghost, is but a criminal affectation of being wiser than God. The point to be resolved, then, is this: Does the Greek verb βαπτίζω invariably signify to dip, to immerse, to plunge? Or does it as properly signify, to shed, to sprinkle, or to pour? In the following Scriptures, this word occurs *four times*.

“I indeed baptize you with water,—He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost. John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” (Matt. iii. 11; Acts i. 5.)

The declaration of John, confirmed by Christ himself, is, “I baptize you with water,—He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.” The question is, Did Jesus *baptize* the Apostles “with the Holy Ghost,” or did he not? That he did not immerse, or dip, or plunge them in the Holy Ghost, is a scriptural certainty. That he did shed forth, or pour out the Holy Ghost upon them, is also certain. And if this is not truly *to baptize* with the Holy Ghost, then was the above Scripture never fulfilled. So that the immersionists must either allow that BAPTIZO does not in this place signify to immerse; or they must deny, in opposition to the plainest facts, that Jesus ever did baptize with the Holy Ghost.

Look at the facts of the case as attested by divine witnesses. “He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.—Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” How both these Scriptures were fulfilled, the day of Pentecost explains. There came down from heaven, and sat upon them, cloven tongues as of fire; “and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Another account of this divine transaction says, “the Holy Ghost *fell on them*.” The miracle is thus explained by the Apostle: “This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will *pour out* of my Spirit upon all flesh. . . . And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will *pour out* in those days of my Spirit.” (Acts ii. 16—18.) Thus, then, in the language of the inspired writers, to *baptize* men with the Holy Ghost and to

pour out the Holy Ghost upon them, are undeniably terms of identical signification; whence it follows, as a clear and certain consequence, that *to baptize* men with water and *to pour out* water upon them are, in the sense of holy Scripture, *one* and the *same* thing. We have, then, the plain, direct authority of the Holy Ghost for affirming that to shed, to sprinkle, and to pour upon, is truly, properly, and scripturally, *to baptize*. And not only do we affirm that thus to pour upon is a scriptural mode of baptism; but we affirm that it is *the mode* which is most plainly and directly sanctioned by divine authority.

The following quotation deserves particular attention, and is a powerful confirmation of our argument:—

“On questions of importance, when beset with contrary opinions, I have always found it worth while to adduce those *synonymous words* which the Spirit has graciously thought fit to employ, for the purpose of fixing the sense of that word which was the immediate subject of investigation. And here let me remind you, that in so doing we waive all reference to critics and commentators, however numerous, and however positive: we depend on the New Testament alone,—on those writers who, under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, were his instruments in explaining spiritual things by spiritual words. Let us try this method in the case before us.

“Luke xxiv. 49. I *send* down the Holy Ghost FROM ON HIGH.

“John i. 32. I saw the Spirit DESCENDING FROM HEAVEN like a dove, and it *abode* upon him.

“Acts ii. 17. This is what was spoken,—I will POUR OUT of my Spirit, &c.

“Acts ii. 33. Jesus,—having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, hath SHED FORTH this, &c.

“ Acts ii. 2, 3. Suddenly there *came from heaven*,— and APPEARED TO THEM cloven tongues, &c.

“ Acts viii. 15, 16. That they might *receive* the Holy Ghost; for as yet he was FALLEN upon none of them.

“ Acts ix. 17. That thou mightest be FILLED with the Holy Ghost.

“ Acts x. 38. God ANOINTED Jesus with the Holy Ghost.

“ Acts x. 44. The Holy Ghost FELL on all.

“ Acts xi. 15. The Holy Ghost FELL on them, as on us at the beginning.

“ Acts x. 45. On the Gentiles was POURED OUT the Holy Ghost.

“ Acts xv. 8. *Giving* them the Holy Ghost.

“ Titus iii. 6. The Holy Ghost which was SHED on us abundantly.

“ 1 Pet. i. 12. The Holy Ghost SENT DOWN from heaven.

“ Eph. i. 13. *Sealed* with the Holy Spirit, &c.

“ John xx. 22. He *breathed on* them and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.

“ These passages give us as *synonymous* with *baptize*;

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| 1. SENDING DOWN. | 5. SHEDDING. | 8. ANOINTING. |
| 2. COMING. | 6. POURING. | 9. FILLING. |
| 3. GIVING. | 7. SITTING OR | 10. SEALING. |
| 4. FALLING. | ABIDING. | 11. BREATHING. |

“ Now in all these synonymous words, choose which you will, or take the whole together, there is not *one* that raises the idea of *plunging*, or so much as approaches to it. Yet they all refer to *baptism*. For instance, ‘the Apostles shall be *baptized* with the Holy Ghost,’ is the prediction; ‘the Holy Ghost is *poured out* upon them,’ is the accomplishment; and even Paul, who was then absent, speaks of the Holy Ghost as being SHED on him; (Titus iii. 6;) at his baptism doubtless.

(Acts ix. 17.) Perhaps, however, after all, the instance of our Lord is the most complete, of *baptism* by the Holy Ghost; and in that case we are certain, to the very height of certainty, that there was no *plunging*, nor any thing like it."

In a word, the baptism with the Holy Ghost was one of the most splendid *realities* witnessed by the Apostles; that baptism consisted in the Holy Ghost's COMING DOWN, DESCENDING, FALLING, and ABIDING upon them; and this visible *outpouring* of the Spirit "from on high" is expressed and described by the verb βαπτίζω (*baptizo*), I BAPTIZE.

With the discussion of this question we have now done. We have always looked upon the question as by no means one of vital or essential moment; and we believe the most eminent Christian divines of all ages have been of the same judgment. We have now examined the subject once more. That dipping is no essential part of baptism, and that baptism by pouring and sprinkling is every way proper and scriptural, are points on which we feel the fullest and most assured certainty. And though we question no man's right to entertain a different opinion, we here record our solemn belief, that the New Testament does not contain a single instance in which baptism was really administered by a total immersion of the party in water. As to the dogma which affirms that such an immersion is really *essential* to the validity of this sacrament, we solemnly declare that we regard it as one of the most pitiful and indefensible extravagancies that ever disgraced a Christian creed, or vexed the church of God with needless controversy. And, to say nothing of the alleged *indelicacy* of dipping, and of the peril, even to life itself, which must attend it as an universal practice, when we consider that this extravagance (we mean the dogma which

affirms that immersion is *essential* to the validity of baptism) was scarcely ever heard of in the world until more than a thousand years after the last of the Apostles had fallen asleep, we cannot but feel that we have bestowed upon it much more attention than it really deserves. But what we have done, we have done for your sakes, and for the sake of them that trouble you. Our prayer to God is, that he would “guide you into all truth,” and give you “right understanding in all things.” Amen.

In conclusion, I address myself to serious Christians in particular. And whether you are my own people, whom I greatly love and respect; or whether you are members of other churches, I urge you solemnly and affectionately to consider what I say. I take for granted that, like myself, you were baptized in infancy. Such being your case, I maintain that until fully convinced in your own mind that *infant baptism* is essentially unlawful, or that *dipping* is essential to the validity of this sacrament, you cannot innocently submit to this ceremony. I maintain especially that *a doubt*, a mere doubt, on this subject, can never justify *you* in such a step as that of being immersed. I hold it certain, on the contrary, that this is one of those cases in which “he that doubteth is condemned if he eat.” In support of this position, I must remark,—

That, in your case, either dipping is essentially *necessary* or it is essentially *wrong*. I think the reason must be obvious. For if this step is not essentially necessary, you are baptized already; and you have no right, no warrant, to repeat the ordinance. I believe no Baptist minister who values his character will dip you, excepting on the assumption that you have never been baptized at all. So that by submitting to this rite you solemnly profess, not merely to doubt the validity of infant baptism, but

to believe that it is sinful, or, at least, that it is *void* in the sight of God. A profession, most assuredly, which no serious Christian can make until he has seriously pondered the path of his feet ; and become “fully persuaded in his own mind” that his infant baptism is really thus essentially wrong, and null, and void. I do not affirm it to be a sin for any man who was baptized in infancy to be dipped ; because a sincere Christian may be brought fully to believe that infant baptism is essentially wrong. But I do maintain that for any man to be dipped merely because he has some doubt upon the subject, is an irrational and unscriptural folly. And this I must maintain until some one can convince me that it is *right*, not only tacitly to assent to, but publicly to profess to believe, propositions which a man either holds to be false, or in reference to which the mind, at best, is in a state of doubt and uncertainty. I have heard of some excellent men who believe in the validity of infant baptism expressing themselves thus : “If you have any doubt on the subject, come to me, and I will dip you.” Now I frankly declare to you, I pretend to no such liberality. Nay, I must be so honest as to assure you, that I will countenance no such folly. First, because I believe that you are truly, scripturally baptized already, and that I have no right to repeat the ordinance. Secondly, I deny that this is either a scriptural or a rational mode of *resolving* a doubt.

Perhaps no subject of equal importance is more seldom taken up in our pulpits than “the doctrine of baptisms.” Your ministers would gladly obey the inspired injunction, and “leaving these first principles of the doctrine of Christ, go on unto perfection.” (Heb. vi. 1, 2.) In principle, the conduct of your ministers is so far right. Still it is possible to give too little attention to this subject, as well as too much ; and I fear we have

fallen into the former error. Again, there are but few subjects on which our people read so little as upon this. No wonder, then, that those who regard it as a great religious duty to make proselytes to a certain theory on this subject, should find so little difficulty in creating doubts in weak and uninstructed minds. But suppose you have been thus “shaken in mind,” what, as a serious Christian, is your duty? I answer, not to plunge headlong into the water for you know not what, you know not why; but to pause, to examine, to inquire; to pray for divine instruction, to examine the word of God, and to consult your own pastors and ministers. All this the word of God requires you to do, before you rashly “cast off your first faith;” all this your reason, your religion, your duty, solemnly require. And when you have done this, you will be ready to act upon conviction, instead of being “tossed about with every wind of doctrine.” Yes, when this is done as it ought to be done, you will be prepared to act upon that divine maxim: “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.”

Suffer me to disabuse you of another very pernicious, but I fear, from what I have heard, a somewhat prevalent, folly. There are some weak-minded people who would settle the matter thus: “I was baptized in infancy; and if, now that I am come to years, I be immersed also, I am then sure to be right, on whichever side of the question the truth may lie.” And there are, who appear to have been beguiled by this egregious piece of sophistry:—“You were baptized in infancy; you are not *quite* certain that this is sufficient; but if you go and be immersed, then you are sure to be right.” A most unworthy, most mischievous, conceit. This is much as if a person called upon to give evidence in a court of law should argue thus: “I don’t know *on which* side of the question the truth lies;

but I'll swear *to both*, and then I am sure to be right." For myself, I judge no man's motives, but I fear there are some persons who have so far acted upon this erroneous principle that their true position is neither more nor less than this:—For the satisfaction of a scrupulous conscience, they have actually sworn to both sides of a question, one side of which must be false; and the best reason they can assign for this astounding conduct is, they do not believe either one side of the question or the other; but are in almost *equal uncertainty* as to both.

It may possibly be remarked that, according to the view I have taken, baptism may be properly administered either by *sprinkling* or by *immersion*. A word on this point, and I have done. I firmly believe that the apostolic practice was to baptize by sprinkling or by pouring *only*. Thus much, however, I admit; that, so far as the *validity* of this sacrament is concerned, if the two modes of baptism be taken separately and on different subjects, *both* may be right. That is to say, where neither party has been baptized at all, an infant may be baptized by sprinkling, and an adult by dipping, and the baptism in both cases be valid. But still, taken together, and in the same subject, one of these must always, and of necessity, be wrong: for if either be right, the other must, for that very reason, be wrong. For instance, if your infant baptism be right and valid, you have no warrant from Scripture, and therefore can have no right, to repeat it. In fact, you cannot repeat it; the thing is impossible. For if your first baptism be valid, your second, call it what you will, is *no baptism at all*; but an useless, unscriptural, and unwarrantable ceremony.*

* In connexion with the *river-baptisms* of the New Testament, I have noticed (*vide* p. 44) a query very confidently put by an

Again I pray that the Lord may give you a right "understanding in all things." And may "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always. Amen."

immersionist writer, thus: "Do those who sprinkle in the present day ever go into a river for that purpose?" May I, without offence, be permitted to ask a question or two relative to the same subject?

On the supposition that John the Baptist *immersed* or *dipped* the people "in Jordan," it will follow that those who, in this country, practise *river-immersion*, are so far acting with the strictest fidelity upon the scriptural plan. These river-immersions are, however, in fact, extremely rare; and yet *two cases of drowning* are now before the public: one in which the administrator, and one in which the candidate, *perished* "in the water!" Now, considering the many thousands baptized by John the Baptist, the Apostles, and their coadjutors, if these were *all immersed*, and the greater part of them, as is supposed, *in rivers*, is it not strange that not one individual appears ever to have been placed in the least degree of peril?

Again, suppose the practice of *river-immersion* should ever become so popular in this country, that the average *annual* number of these immersions shall be equal to the number which John is supposed to have baptized in *one year*; and suppose the number of these *fatal occurrences* to increase only in the same *ratio* as the number of *river-immersions*; what then will be the *annual* number of these cases of "MANSLAUGHTER?"

POSTSCRIPT.

“THE language of St. Peter, when he baptized the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius, does not favour immersion: ‘Can any man *forbid water*, that these should not be baptized?’—that is, forbid water to be brought. Had he intended to baptize them by immersion, it would have been much more natural for him to say, ‘Can any man forbid us to go out to the water and baptize them?’

“The circumstances of the jailer’s baptism (Acts xvi. 19—39) imply that he was not baptized by immersion. He was baptized *in the night*, when it would have been very inconvenient to go to a suitable place for immersion. The rite was evidently performed in the principal *room of the prison*; for nothing is said of their leaving the house. And when he professed his faith, we are told that he was *baptized immediately*; not, he immediately started off with his family and with Paul and Silas, in the night, to a suitable place to be immersed.

“The moral unsuitableness of immersing both sexes, even with bathing-dresses, before a promiscuous community, especially in countries where bathing is seldom practised, renders it highly improbable that it would form a part of the pure system of Gospel religion. [With all the arrangements of modern times, baptism by immersion is not a decent practice; there is not a female, perhaps, who submits to it, who has not a great previous struggle with her delicacy; but that, at a time when no such accommodations could be had as

have since been found necessary, such a ceremony should have been constantly performing wherever the Apostles and first preachers went, and that at pools and rivers, in the presence of many spectators, and they sometimes unbelievers and scoffers, is a thing not rationally credible.—*R. Watson.*]

“Christianity was designed for *universal* dissemination ; and, therefore, finally, *the danger to the life and health* of those who should be thus baptized in the winter season, and, especially in the colder climates of the earth, renders it a very unsuitable part of a universal religion. The ministers of Christ are nowhere directed to defer the administration of this ordinance till the summer arrives, nor are they authorized to make an exception in the case of the most confirmed invalids, whose very life would be in jeopardy.”—*Bib. Theo. from Storr and Flatt.*

“ But it is satisfactory to discover that all the attempts made to impose upon Christians a practice repulsive to the feelings, dangerous to the health, and offensive to delicacy, *is destitute of all scriptural authority*, and of really primitive practice.”—*R. Watson.*

A WORD
TO
MEN OF REASON AND RELIGION,
CONCERNING A CERTAIN "LETTER TO THE REV. G. TURNER,
WESLEYAN MINISTER,
BY THE BAPTIST MINISTER OF STOCKPORT."

IT is a fact pretty well known, that three sermons were recently delivered in the Wesleyan chapel, Hillgate, on the subject of Christian baptism. Since the delivery of these sermons, a tract has appeared, entitled, "The Sentiments of the Rev. J. Wesley on the Scriptural Mode of Baptism." And, last of all, "A Letter to the Rev. G. Turner," containing remarks on the said tract, "by the Baptist Minister of Stockport."

What end the writer of the "Letter" had in view, is a point on which I hazard no opinion. It has, however, been suggested to me, that one principal design of the "Letter" is to persuade the public that Mr. Turner is "the *voluntary* aggressor" in this dispute; and that his sermons contained a great deal of bad temper, bitterness of spirit, "slander, and reviling, and reflections against the Baptists." I knew, of course, that to any man at all acquainted with the FACTS of the case, all this must appear laughable enough. But, it has been suggested, "the public do not know the case so well;" and, therefore, may be deceived. As several friends appear to concur in this opinion, I have abandoned a resolution

previously expressed, and now devote a moment's attention to "A Letter to the Rev. G. Turner, by the Baptist Minister of Stockport." The first thing I shall notice is the following :—

"It is not so very long since you entered *voluntarily* into the arena of religious disputation in Stockport."—Page 5.

To say that all this is simply false, would be to mark but *one* quality of its entire baseness. My attention was first called to the subject of baptism at one of our Leaders'-Meetings. From a conversation which there arose, it became evident to me that, both among my own people and among the members of some other churches, a good deal of excitement existed on the subject of adult *dipping* as opposed to infant *baptism*; and being requested to preach on the subject, I promised to consider the matter, and to act upon a sense of duty only. I found, upon inquiry, that if this question involved a truth worth contending for, *a move on the defensive* was really necessary. I was assured, on respectable authority, that the practice of infant baptism had been publicly denounced as unscriptural and sinful, while the ministers who defend and practise infant baptism were publicly represented as teachers or ministers of sin. I found in the houses of my own people tracts, bills, &c., the obvious and avowed design of which was to promote the all-important work of *dipping*; and the obvious tendency of which was to deceive; and I found also that these tracts, &c., were being industriously circulated among my own people by "The Baptist Tract Society, Zion Chapel, Stockport."* In

* I refer particularly to certain bills stitched in or pasted upon the cover of these "Tracts." But this Society is not the only one in operation for the same malpurpose.

addition to what I saw, I was assured that some of the lowest arts of an unscrupulous proselytism were in full and vigorous operation.

Now suppose I should grant, that in all this the *movement party* did nothing but what is *lawful* and *right*; that they merely *used* their Christian liberty, and only manifested a proper zeal for what, to them, appeared to be the cause of truth; (I have, of course, a *private* opinion on the subject;) but suppose I grant all this; still the following *FACTS* were too plain to be denied:—that the partisans of immersion had created a ferment among the members of my own and of other churches; that several members of other churches had already “cast off their first faith” by being publicly immersed; that several others were much disturbed in mind, and had been made to believe that it was hardly possible for them to be saved without being put “under the water;” that though no *case* had yet occurred, several of my own friends had begun to exhibit decided *symptoms* of hydrocephalus; that the proselyting movement was still going on with unabated vigour; and, finally, that no voice had yet been raised, no effort made, either to repel the aggression or to stay the progress of what I sincerely believed to be a mischievous delusion.

In addition to the above facts, several well-informed members of our society, who had sat under the Wesleyan ministry all their lives, assured me that they had never yet heard one sermon in defence of Christian baptism as administered among us as a body; and that though themselves and their families were assailed on every hand by tracts, &c., in favour of the immersionist theory, they had sought in vain for any thing in defence of their own views.

Now when, with the fullest knowledge of the above, and of other similar facts, I was solicited and urged by

some of the most respectable members and officers of my own church, to preach on the subject of Christian baptism, let men of reason and religion say, did I commit an *offence* by yielding to this request? Is the liberty of speech a liberty to be confined exclusively to the "Baptist minister of Stockport?" Are those who consider it to be a paramount duty to agitate the public mind on the subject of immersion, the *only* people who must be allowed to speak in defence of their own sentiments? Could I, as a Wesleyan minister, have remained silent, without a criminal neglect of duty? So much for the inimitably *low* assertion: "You entered *voluntarily* into the arena of religious disputation in Stockport."

When I did consent to take up the subject of baptism, I took it up really and avowedly *on its own merits*; and on its own merits I endeavoured to discuss that subject fully and fairly. The *name* of the "Baptist minister of Stockport" was no more mentioned than if no such person had existed; *no action* that he ever did, *no word* he ever uttered, no word or action ever *imputed* to him, was honoured with *one single allusion*, from beginning to end, directly or indirectly, from the pulpit or from the press. As for the *style* and *spirit* of the LECTURES, these are points on which the lectures will speak for themselves, not many days hence; and, for the present, I shall not deem it necessary to contradict insinuations, the falsehood of which can be sworn to by hundreds of witnesses.

The next *move* on the part of the aggression was, the circulation of *five hundred printed bills*; in which the name of "the Rev. George Turner" was most unrighteously condemned to figure in connexion with a *name* which I must still pass over in respectful silence. "Two Lectures in Zion Chapel" were thus announced. And the public was thus apprised that the lectures of "the Rev. G. Turner" would be brought under *notice*.

How this promise was fulfilled I neither know nor care. But I suppose neither the "Baptist Minister of Stockport," nor his hearers, will *deny* that the *name* of Mr. Turner was reiterated at the speed of ten, twenty, thirty times in the course of one lecture; and that the mention of that humble name was accompanied with excessively *low, personal, sneering* remarks about Mr. Turner's want of capacity, Mr. Turner's grammar, Mr. Turner's Greek, &c., &c., &c. I believe it also to be a fact, that at the close of his lectures, the "Baptist minister of Stockport" informed his hearers that he had now answered all Mr. Turner's arguments.

What next? Why the very man by whom the common courtesies of life had been thus publicly outraged, the very man by whom I had been thus publicly attacked, maligned, and abused, and all without the smallest provocation, comes out with a poor scurrilous "Letter," the object of which is, to persuade the public that himself and his friends have been most shockingly maltreated, and reviled, and slandered by "the Rev. George Turner!"

It would appear, however, from his letter, that the "Baptist minister of Stockport" is at last awaking to a consciousness of the humiliating position in which his folly has placed him. He says,

"No doubt we were both of us *misreported* when we lectured."

This is likely enough. But what can men of candour think of the individual who, while he thus writes, publicly undertakes, and that too on the sole authority of this "no doubt" *misreport*, to answer a series of discourses which he never heard? who publicly charges upon Mr. Turner the thousand absurdities created by this "no doubt" *misreporting*; and who, upon these very *misreports*, grounds a series of public

personal attacks, of the lowest and most offensive description? I know where it is written: "He that *answereth* a matter before he *heareth* it, it is folly and shame unto him." How much of this *folly* has been acted, how much of this *shame* incurred, by the "Baptist minister of Stockport," let men of reason and religion judge.

For myself, I have had a little to do with controversy. I never yet shrunk from an opponent, however powerful, or however violent; and I have warred with some men of no mean account in both these respects. But *self-respect* is a duty which the humblest individual ought never to violate. And *time* is too precious to be wasted upon the "noisy winds." Whatever I may judge necessary *for the defence of my own views of divine truth*, I will publish in due time. But the man who can *act such a part*, and then *publish such a "letter,"* must never expect to meet "the Rev. George Turner" in the "arena of *religious disputation*," either in Stockport or any where else. Such a man may go up into "the arena," if he can climb so high; but, most assuredly, "the Rev. George Turner" will never come down *to meet* him. It has been whispered to me by those who profess to know "the man," that the "Baptist minister of Stockport" will say, "Ah! ah! Mr. Turner is *afraid* of me!" But if ever so vain a thought should enter into his head, I beg to remind him, first, that I have already encountered far more mighty spirits, and that without evincing any symptom of *fear*; secondly, that when a man has frequently met, and has never yet shrunk from the fire of an antagonist, there is a description of character which such a man may decline *to meet*, without the slightest imputation upon either his *courage* or his *honour*.

One word respecting the tract entitled, "The Senti-

ments of the Rev. John Wesley on the Mode of Christian Baptism." The tract is mine ; and I hold myself responsible for *every remark that I have made therein* ; and for every inference that can be fairly drawn from such remarks. Relative to this tract, the "Letter" contains one or two items of mendacity which I will notice ; the rest may pass for what they are worth.

The writer says,

"You complain of *a quotation* made from his (Wesley's) Notes on the New Testament."

No such thing. Quote as much as you like. What I complain of is, a *palpable perversion* of Mr. Wesley's words. Again :

"You did not expect that any Baptist minister would allow you to slander his principles and his denomination thus."

I deny most solemnly, that I have either slandered or knowingly misrepresented one or the other. I have produced an instance in which the words of Mr. Wesley have been *plainly perverted*, to serve the meanest of party purposes. I have assumed that this perversion arose either from *ignorance* or from *dishonesty*, on the part of the perverter. I have also assumed that, for this reason, "the bold assertions of this party, in reference to the judgment of other Christian divines *on the same subject*," ought to be received with great caution. And by all this I still abide.

Mr. Wesley's sentiments on the mode of baptism are thus stated :—"To sum up all, the manner of baptizing (whether by dipping or sprinkling) is not determined in Scripture. There is no command for one rather than the other. There is no example from which we can conclude for dipping rather than sprinkling. There are probable examples of both, and *both are EQUALLY contained* in the natural meaning of the word." (*Wesley's Works*, vol. x., p. 190.)

Upon this summary, I have the remark: "Such being Mr. Wesley's sentiments, it must be obvious to every impartial reader that the note on Rom. vi. 4, *honestly* interpreted, amounts simply to this,—'Here is an allusion to *one* of *two* modes of baptism, *both* of *which* are equally sanctioned by divine authority.'"

Now mark the sagacity, and mark the candour, of the "Baptist minister of Stockport." In reference to the above he says,—

"I shall not now say much about that precious bit of dogmatism in which *you say*, 'Here is an allusion to *one* of *two* modes of baptism, *both* of *which* are equally sanctioned by divine authority.' The italics are your own.....But take heed you do not forget *your own assertions*. You say *our* mode of baptism *is* sanctioned by divine authority. I shall hold you to that, Sir."—Pages 7, 8.

Is it possible for any man with his eyes open and the passage before him thus to write, and not to *know* that he is grossly violating every principle of truth and honesty? Dogmatism, when the word *happens* to have a meaning, means some magisterial or positive *assertion*; I have made *no assertion* whatever; yet here is a "precious bit of dogmatism." Again, whether the sentiment contained in the above remark is right or wrong, is a point on which I have not even given an opinion: the "Letter" writer shouts, "Take heed you do not forget *your own assertions!*" Again, the only point on which I have indicated even an opinion is, the meaning of *Mr. Wesley*, in his note on Rom. vi. 4. "The Baptist minister of Stockport" avers,

"*You* (Mr. T.) *say* our mode of baptism *is* sanctioned by divine authority. I shall hold *you to that*, Sir!"

Is not this fine? The man who will honestly speak the truth, and will himself keep to the point really at issue, shall find no difficulty in keeping me to that. But for any man thus to trump up a *fiction*, a fiction, the

falsehood of which is so purely transparent that even a blind man may see through it, and then gravely to add, "I shall hold you to *that*, Sir;" and all this too *before* the beginning, is really too bad. Who but Van Amburgh would ever think of *meeting* such a being as this, in "the arena of religious disputation?" *

The "Letter" writer says, again,

"If you are capable of taking counsel, instruct the printer to strike out all the *slander*, and all the *reviling*, and all the reflections against the Baptists, and let the blanks be filled up with arguments."—Page 8.

This "counsel" relates to my lectures, now in the press. And in reply to this very harmless piece of impudence, I beg to state that I will print, not only every argument that I have employed, but, as far as I can call it to mind, *every questionable expression* that fell from me in the whole three lectures, merely that the excellency of this "counsel" may be made manifest to all men. And I hereby publicly challenge my counsellor to do just the same in regard to the "Two Lectures" in which he answered "all Mr. Turner's arguments." And if the "Baptist minister of Stockport" shrink from the responsibility of putting into print the *personal scurrilities* which he dared to utter in the pulpit, I beg leave to tell him that, *whatever else he may* "send to the press," an impartial jury will not be long in *finding* which of the two parties before it is the aggressor, the *reviler*, &c., &c., &c.

Stockport, December 4th, 1843.

* As this individual is so obviously *anxious for an affray*, I would recommend him to look out in the vicinity of "Waterloo," where he will find an "arena," and several "disputants" also, both of which are much better suited to his peculiar genius than anything he is likely to meet with in "Wellington-Road South."

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